

Northern Worker

Winter 2019

Boss Blames Minimum Wage For Closure

Capitalist Marc Morley has lost. His business empire has pooped in the proverbial bed and with his dying breath he falls back on the tired tropes of the bourgeoisie. The failed owner of multiple restaurants in St. Lawrence County, has closed Between the Buns and Club 21 in Potsdam, Hot Tamale and Chix n Pies eateries in both Ogdensburg and Massena and his Hot Tamale in Canton. According to published estimates, about 60 people have lost their jobs as a result. The closures were unannounced and unanticipated by rank and file workers at the locations, occurring amongst the holiday ruckus. We have only to blame workers' expectation of a living wage for this disaster.

According to Morley, "The majority of our people are minimum wage and so every year we eat that cost" and "as a business owner you take all of the risks and in the end you are the one that has to deal with it." But is that truly the case? Consider that a reported 60 people have just lost their jobs as a result of this. Then realize that in his own words Morley claims that "Over the [10] years we've been in business we've employed thousands of people and helped them raise families."

Really? What these numbers show me is that "thousands" of people couldn't live on near poverty level handouts and jumped ship in search of something better. Last time we checked, a "family" consists on multiple people – typically including children. Wages in the range of the NYS minimum aren't enough for a single adult worker let alone a family. Morley like all of his kind not only hurt workers, they subjugate entire families to poverty. Instead of helping to "raise families" they're busy neglecting children.

Should we pity the failed business owner? Have they been supplementing their income with state handouts all along? Has their child been receiving reduced or free lunches at school? Have they just gotten done providing a "normal" holiday for their family only to find they've lost the ability to pay off their credit card? Morley's old song that "as a business owner you take all of the risks and in the end you are the one that has to deal with it." is true. He is taking all the risk - at his option. "Thousands of people" didn't have the option. They couldn't choose to not work this job. As a group, the minimum wage

worker in the food service industry works in the most stressful, caustic, lowest paying and least rewarding sector of the economy. They are wage slaves who only accept the yoke under threat from the legions of unemployed who could step into their jobs at a moment's notice. They accept the yoke willingly in defense of their families. If we look for a failed hero in this story, we find them where they've always been, at the bottom, protecting their family from the creatures with money.

- ExWorker

Welcome to the Winter 2019 Issue of Northern Worker

As this is our first issue, you should be aware that the intent of our small staff is to publish quarterly. Northern Worker is run by a collective of workers like yourself in our spare time. It is with great honor and respect that we dedicate this first issue to those fighting and surviving in the service industry in St. Lawrence County. In solidarity, we are The Black Fly Anarchist Collective.

Every Worker's Refuge – The IWW

Solidarity: Working people have only one real option in today's economy. We have to resist, with all our might, the big-business program of further and deeper poverty for working people.

For the first time in modern history, profits are going up while wages and benefits are going down. In the past the two have always been tied, however unequally. Now the game has changed. Worse impoverishment, and more of it, is the wave of the future if we don't stand against the tide. The working conditions we see today in Asia and Central America are a good indication of the future of our own working lives in the "Western Democracies."

We have only one hope of fending off this tidal wave of misery. That hope, that tool, is solidarity. Every working stiff must stand up for every other working stiff, no matter where you live or where you come from, no matter if you are male or female, young or old, we must stand together. Every loss to any worker is a loss to us all, and every gain by any part of the working class is a victory for us all.

We must stand together. We must refuse to handle scab goods, to buy scab products, to cross the picket line. We must extend our hands across the

borders and across the seas. We must support each worker's struggle as if it were our very own because that is exactly what it is. Together we can win. Together we can make this world a better place to live, to raise our children, to spend our old age.

The IWW is a member-run union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities. IWW members are organizing to win better conditions today and build a world with economic democracy tomorrow. We want our workplaces run for the benefit of workers and communities rather than for a handful of bosses and executives.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially. This means we organize all workers producing the same goods or providing the same services into one union, rather than dividing workers by skill or trade, so we can pool our strength to win our demands together. Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have made significant contributions to the labor struggles around the world and have a proud tradition of organizing across gender, ethnic and racial lines - a tradition begun long before such organizing was popular.

We invite you to become a member whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, and recognize that unions are not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address common concerns. Sometimes this means refusing to work with dangerous equipment and chemicals. Sometimes it means striking or signing a contract. Other times it mean agitating around particular issues or grievances in a workplace or industry.

The IWW is a democratic, member-run union. That means members decide what issues to address, and which tactics to use and we directly vote on office holders, from stewards to national offices. Why wait? Imagine what a union of restaurant workers in St. Lawrence County could accomplish! Join the IWW and organize for a better future.

- IWW

Learn a Term!

Direct Action: Direct action occurs when a group takes an action which is intended to reveal an existing problem, highlight an alternative, or demonstrate a possible solution to a social issue. It is the opposite of appealing to authority.

Worker Solidarity Secures Gains in Walk-out

Tenant's Unions – Organize Where You Live

In July of 2018, eleven lifeguards walked off the job at the public beach in Potsdam, NY. The reason was wages. While it's a given that the NYS minimum wage is far from being a living wage for even a single adult, it seems that towns in the state aren't even held to that sub-par expectation. Free from that requirement, the town and village boards have stuck to the national minimum wage (\$7.25 as opposed to \$10.40) for years. Fed up with such insulting pay for a vital job requiring much training and the burden of life-or-death responsibility, the lifeguards walked. "We thought the pay was a good wage for the job" said Potsdam Village Administrator Greg Thompson.

In a letter to the public signed by striking lifeguards, they stated "when first hired for this summer, no lifeguard received any kind of statement telling us how much we were going to be paid nor any kind of document for us to sign agreeing to our wages."

In the short term, the striking lifeguards won. The municipality offered a raise to \$11 an hour for all lifeguards - head lifeguards would get \$13 an hour - and playground assistants would receive \$10.40 for the remainder of the 2017 season. Town supervisor Ann Carvill wished the lifeguards had spoken to village officials before walking out, saying that such drastic measures resulted in more chaos than necessary. "But lessons are learned," she said.

Certainly lessons were learned. Mainly don't rely on any sense of fairness from elected officials - most of them Democrats and most of them current or former union members in their "day jobs". Forget about the teamsters in the rank and file of the municipality lifting a single finger in support of the underdogs in the name of worker solidarity. The only lesson that was learned was that through organizing and the wildcat strike, the summer recreation employees got their demands rapidly met. Not only did they improve their position they insured that in the coming season Potsdam would be pegging pay to the NYS minimum wage - which is an improvement but still not enough given the job responsibilities involved. Every worker's take-away should be that together in unity you can materially disrupt your employers trade with organized action and get your demands met. -Anonymous

I was in disbelief. The older lady in front of me, the mother of a local politician and a Democratic party insider in her own right, just suggested that some neighborhoods should be off-limits to students. Did I hear that right? I asked. I did.

We live in a community where the less than affluent are the vast majority. For thousands of college students, our villages are a second home. Many of their neighbors are the lower income workers who slave in the service industry that supports them. Lacking reliable public transportation in outlying areas, our villages also welcome the broken and the broke, folks who are trapped in the government's kinder, gentler cycle of dependency. For the sharks in the rental housing business, these three groups are chum in the water.

Sub-standard housing is the norm and landlords grow fat on the squalid apartments we have no alternative but to accept. What choice is there? There is better housing but it's out of the reach of most. What can be done alone? Speaking truth to power alone is scary and isolating. Don't worry. There is a way to improve your conditions - by leveraging collective power.

How do we build enough power to stay in our homes and communities and thrive?! Through organizing. We must organize because overcoming fear and isolation is impossible to do on our own. We organize because we seek to transform people's fear and isolation into dignity and solidarity both in our homes and communities. Organizing isn't just sending out an email or creating a social media page, although those will likely be steps that we take. Organizing is building real face-to-face relationships between you and your neighbors over time. The organization of tenant unions are the building blocks in a happier, safer and more fulfilling life for you, your family, and your neighbors.

Imagine the power wielded when a few dozen people speak out about or picket a local slumlord at a municipal board meeting or outside his rental, or flood the local paper with letters and photos telling of the horrible conditions you're expected to live in, or stage a demonstration outside his or her home. Together we will not be alone. Together we will not tolerate broken appliances & fixtures, or leaks, or rodents. We can send a clear message with one voice. Rents WILL be affordable. Conditions WILL be acceptable. Security deposits WILL be reasonably refunded. They WILL be held accountable when they fail to fulfill the rights guaranteed to their tenants under the law - or they WILL be held up to public scrutiny and singled out for ridicule until they correct what needs correcting. We will do this to one slumlord after another until the work is done.

One of my clearest childhood memories of my grandfather is of him seated in his dining room with many of the other tenants in our building discussing and studying what their tenant's rights were and what steps they needed to take to secure them. Join together friends, or the vultures will feast on your bones.

- Barely Getting By

Join Us!

Northern Worker needs you! If you rage inside, If you believe in a future where Liberty is for everyone and Heirarchy is history, If you have a story to tell, then Northern Worker is your chance. Contact us at ChickenBaconRanch at protonmail dot com and we work with you to get your thoughts in our paper.

In Out Next Issue: It's The Climate, Stupid

The world's leading climate scientists have warned us that we have until 2030 to prevent temperature increases from exceeding 1.5°C. That's a little over twelve years - by environmental standards, the blink of an eye.

If this temperature rise reaches 2°C, the results will be catastrophic: mass extinction, famine, droughts, floods, wildfires, and the spread of infectious diseases, on an unprecedented global scale. The time to act is now, before it's too late.

The NeoLiberal NAFTA Globalization Groupies want you to believe that once we each have a tesla and a roof full of solar panels everything will be just fine as long as we keep recycling our household waste. This is crap.

Just **100** companies have been responsible for about 71% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. That's not something I made up. That's Fortune.com talking.

It's time to dismantle capitalism. This is the first time in the history of mankind that we are setting ourselves the task of intentionally, within a defined period of time, to change the economic development model that has been reigning for at least 150 years, since the Industrial Revolution. Again, not something I made up, that's the Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Climate Change.

This and more awaits you in the Spring 2019 issue of Northern Worker. Until then, love each other, defend each other, learn from each other.

- Northern Worker

Further Reading...

The truth is, you're already an anarchist yourself! Search online for David Graeber's short piece: "Are You An Anarchist? The Answer May Surprise You!"